



November 2013

Washington Newsline

Washington D.C. Explained

By Daniel Sheehan, Executive Director, AFOP

On behalf of the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP), I want to sincerely thank all who supported, attended and participated in the AFOP National Conference in September. The conference provided AFOP member organization staff with substantive workforce development training that will help them continue the high levels of performance they consistently achieve in serving the nation's migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families. I also want to express my deep gratitude to United States Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa, Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee Chairman; United States Representative John Tierney of Massachusetts, House



Daniel Sheehan, AFOP Executive Director, Senator Harkin, Jesus Gamboa, AFOP Board

Education and the Workforce Committee member; Jim Jones, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention at the United States Environmental Protection Agency; and Gerri Fiala, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for Employment and Training, for talking with conference-goers about the many pressing issues of the day.

Following on the heels of that successful conference, the federal government, for the first time in 17 years, partially shut down after lawmakers could not agree on legislation to fund government functions beyond the September 30 fiscal year-end. National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) grantees could still draw down their federal grant funds through the federal Payment Management System during the shutdown, but the subsequent fight over increasing the federal debt ceiling

made AFOP worry about how a possible breach of the debt limit might force the U.S. Treasury to go hunting for unspent funds to meet the nation's obligations. Fortunately, it did not come to that ... yet.

To stave off significant economic disruption, perhaps even a worldwide recession, Congress agreed to and the president enacted legislation that increased the debt ceiling through February 7 and gave Treasury the authority to use "extraordinary measures" that could prevent a debt ceiling breach for several weeks after that. The bill also extended federal spending at the post-sequestration level of fiscal year 2013 through January 15, putting furloughed federal employees back to work. To remove the threat of future sequestration, the legislative deal also called for the House and Senate Budget Committees to meet in a conference, and produce by mid-December, a compromise budget that would set aggregate revenues and spending for fiscal year 2014. However, given the differences between the House and Senate in how their members view adequate funding levels and the need for new revenue, the Budget Committees' conference has its work cut out for it. If a budget deal cannot be reached, I fear that we may see ourselves in yet another budget crisis early next year.

Inside...

- Washington D.C. Explained
- Health & Safety
- Site Visits
- Robin Romano—CITF
- Immigration Law & Policy
- NFJP - Peer to Peer
- Success Stories

To help preserve non-defense discretionary (NDD) funding, like NFJP, Chairman Harkin invited AFOP and others to a recent meeting on Capitol Hill to thank us for our advocacy in support of those “without a voice in Washington” and to suggest a call-to-action that we as a community make Budget Committee conferees understand clearly the successes of domestic programs, and how vital they are to individuals, communities, and the nation as a whole. While the “vast majority” of lawmakers want to undo sequestration, the senator said, the challenge will be in how any plan would accomplish that. He stressed that domestic discretionary spending has borne more than its fair share of recent cuts, some \$13 billion, and \$20 billion over the last decade. “Think of what this nation – this ‘American family’ of ours – has lost as a result of those cuts in dreams deferred and promise lost.” Senator Harkin said the next two to four weeks will be critical for proponents of domestic discretionary programs, and encouraged all to “dig deep and get new results.”

Also in a House-Senate conference committee is the much delayed Farm Bill. AFOP supports passage of the legislation that would, among others, reauthorize agricultural job upgrade training. Called the “Agricultural Career and Employment Training Grant” (ACE), it would be reauthorized at \$10 million per year for five years. Congress previously funded ACE training at \$4 million; however, grants were not awarded and a later Congress rescinded the appropriation. That conference, too, is having a challenge because of significant differences over cuts to the food stamps program, also called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

AFOP would also like for the Senate’s committee-approved Workforce Investment Act reauthorization bill to go to conference. Before that can happen, the full Senate must first consider and pass the measure. Unfortunately, to date, Senate leadership has not scheduled floor time for the bill. To help remedy that, AFOP recently joined with hundreds of other collegial organizations in writing to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky to encourage them to bring the legislation forward for consideration as soon as possible. AFOP supports the Senate bill because it would improve the workforce development system and preserve NFJP as a national program. The House passed a WIA consolidation bill, known as the SKILLS Act, in March.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 DC Explained
- 3 Health & Safety
- 4 Member Visits
- 5 NFJP Training Certification
- 6 Robin Romano - CITF
- 9 Immigration Law & Policy
- 10 -Grantees Assisting Each Other
-Global Conference on Child Labor
- 11 Letter from the Field
- 12 Success Stories



The AFOP Washington *Newsline* (ISSN# 1056-8565) is produced by the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs (AFOP), a national federation of agencies serving migrant and seasonal farmworkers. AFOP’s mission is to improve the quality of life for migrant and seasonal farmworkers and their families by providing advocacy for the member organizations that serve them.

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We are also keeping a close eye on comprehensive immigration reform legislation. As many of you know, the Senate in June approved a bipartisan comprehensive plan that the House has heretofore not considered. Instead, the House is moving forward with a piecemeal approach on immigration, advancing smaller, issue-specific bills instead of a comprehensive plan. While supporters of the Senate bill continue to press the House to consider the bipartisan measure, some are growing concerned that the dwindling legislative calendar may mean the House will shelve the matter until next year. Given that next year is a federal election year, they worry that Congress may not tackle real reform until 2015. Indeed, AFOP attended a recent immigration symposium at Georgetown University at which government, association, and academic luminaries almost to a person expressed doubt about action on the legislation anytime soon.

In closing, I want to remind NFJP grantees, while it is just November, that the board will be meeting in Washington, D.C. for its annual mini-conference and board meeting February 5-7, 2014. That date is just a little less than three months away, so please mark your calendars and begin making plans to attend. ♦

Health & Safety Programs—A Farewell to Levy

By Levy Schroeder, Director of Health & Safety Programs, AFOP



2011 team: Levy Schroeder, Jessica Werder, Melanie Forti

The adage “time flies when you’re having fun” certainly applies to my tenure here at AFOP, and as I prepare to leave, I have to wonder how did nearly eight years pass so quickly? The answer lies in the sheer pleasure of knowing that the work of the AFOP Health & Safety Programs provides thousands of farmworkers with information and training that is vital to their health, safety and well-being.

When I arrived at AFOP in February of 2006, the SAFE AmeriCorps program was, for all intents and purposes, the single health and safety program offered by AFOP. Project HOPE was in an embryonic state with a single pilot project with Telamon Corporation in Indiana. At that time, Project LEAF was just a twinkle in Carol Parker’s eye at the EPA.

In 2007 the SAFE AmeriCorps program ended, but the AFOP Health & Safety team pressed on

with a rapid expansion of Project HOPE. By 2008, Project HOPE had filled the gap left by SAFE AmeriCorps, with 26 participating sites and over 100 trainers who reached out to an average of 8,000 farmworkers each year with Worker Protection Standard (WPS) pesticide safety training.



Levy Schroeder and Paul Chavez

Meanwhile, our friends Kevin Keaney and Carol Parker at the EPA were interested in providing take-home pesticide safety training to farmworkers, with the understanding that farmworker children need protection from this kind of exposure to toxic chemicals. They asked us to design the LEAF curriculum and develop a training program. The Health & Safety team happily took up that challenge and as I look back on it, Project LEAF was my favorite.

Continued on page 5

A Visit to Two of AFOP's Outstanding Member Sites

By: Melanie Forti and Vashti Kelly of the Health & Safety Programs, AFOP

We recently conducted site visits in Oklahoma and Texas where we met incredible people achieving great accomplishments.

In Oklahoma we visited our member organization ORO Development Corporation where we were welcomed by the Executive Director and Board Member, Jorge Martinez and Director of Field Operations, Minnie Castillo.

Patty Murillo, ORO, is involved in the farmworker community and provides AFOP's Health & Safety trainings. Patty, along with ORO's case managers has been focused on fostering new partnerships with growers. We visited several of these farms with Marcela Loreto, Case Manager in Muskogee, OK and Olivia Tovar, Case Manager in Clinton, OK. Marcela took us to Green Leaf Nursery in Tahlequah (Cherokee Nation); this is the 3rd largest nursery in the U.S. Patty provided pesticide safety and heat stress training to 17 farmworkers in that location.

Patty and Olivia also coordinated a training



Patty Murillo providing a bilingual LEAF training to 18 nursery workers at a nursery in Muskogee, OK

session at the Carnegie Park in Ft. Gibson, OK where Patty trained 16 farmworkers. Serving farmworkers sometimes poses challenges that we need to embrace; in this case piping hot homemade tamales were provided to the participants who all came directly from work. While the parents were receiving training, their children had supervision while playing on the outdoor learning environment.

We are proud to report that as of October, ORO Development Corporation has trained over 520

farmworkers on pesticide safety and 150 on heat stress.

In Houston, TX we visited Motivation, Education & Training, Inc. (MET) where we met the Executive Director and Board Member, Luis Esparza. We had a great conversation about the current Farmworker Occupational Health & Safety Trainings Program and the opportunity to expand into Louisiana.

In MET's Weslaco, TX location we met with Sylvia Murphy and Eva Martinez, two MET employees and Health & Safety trainers. We observed both trainers provide a coordinated training session at South Texas College (STC), the local technical college where farmworkers are also receiving welding technology training through National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP).

According to current information, MET has trained an astounding 1,850 farmworkers on



Left: Eva Martinez providing Heat Stress training.

Right: Sylvia Murphy describing pesticide applications.

pesticide safety and over 1,120 on heat stress throughout the Texas.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Americans use more than a billion pounds of pesticides every year to combat pests on farm crops, in homes, places of business, schools, parks, hospitals, and other public places. Farmworkers are at a higher risk than the rest of the population and for this reason alone, it is important that we continue to provide trainings to the farmworker community.



Continued from page 3

In 2009 we resurrected the SAFE AmeriCorps program with new funding and important improvements to the program design. With a fresh start, we brought a new crew of AmeriCorps members to the National Chavez Center in Keene, California for a week-long orientation. Launching the program at that sacred and inspirational place is among my fondest memories of my time at AFOP.

When the Obama administration began, then-Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis dedicated a great deal of effort toward farmworkers, and AFOP was awarded the Susan Harwood training grant to develop heat stress prevention training. What a thrill it was to have our trainers participate in the Heat Stress campaign and training marathon, where we trained 2071 farmworkers in a single week and hosted the Secretary of Labor at a training session provided by HELP New Mexico.

I'm leaving AFOP at a time when we have responded effectively to funding issues and re-



Levy Schroeder

grouped to continue the important work of providing farmworkers with pesticide safety and heat stress training. A lot happens over a span of eight years, and the AFOP Health & Safety team has always found solutions to the challenges we've faced. The work here will continue and there will always be plenty of challenges in the area of farmworker occupational safety and health training needs, information and awareness-raising, and policy issues such as adapting to long-overdue, still pending changes to the Worker Protection Standard.

My new career will intersect with the AFOP Health & Safety team as we are all involved in protections against pesticides and toxins. Trust me, it will be fun! ♦

NFJP Training Certification

By Nelson Diaz, Program Coordinator, Telamon, VA



Jodie Kelley, Ana Nethken
Photo : Telamon

At the Annual AFOP National Conference in September, all attendees had opportunities to strengthen skills, network, and learn useful information from a myriad of workshops. A particular highlight of the event was the graduation of more than 170 NFJP staff participants from the AFOP Training Institute (ATI).

One such graduate was Ana Nethken Workforce Development Specialist from Telamon-Harrisonburg, who was thrilled when she was awarded her certification from AFOP's Job Retention training program. The certificate marked her completion of an extensive one

year training program conducted by Jodie Sue Kelley from Cygnet Associates. Through the trainings, staff acquired new professional tools and strategies for improving their on-the-job effectiveness and capacity.

The training consisted of six regular webinars, face-to-face workshops, independent study through various projects, and homework assignments. All 170 students took and passed the final exam and earned their new credentials. Ana said she really enjoyed the program and that she felt the training would better enable her to provide the services her customers need.

Although the focus of the training was on best-practices, the ultimate goal was to increase job retention numbers and improve the success of clients. ♦

In Memorium—U. Roberto Romano

By: David A. Strauss, former Executive Director, AFOP

It is always a shock to hear about the unexpected, early death of a friend. Such was the case last week when I got the news that U. Roberto (Robin) Romano had died. As of this writing it is still unclear what the cause of death was. Whatever the cause, he is someone who will be greatly missed by the worldwide child advocacy community. I will also miss his



Robin Romano
Photo: Google

p e r s i s t e n t ,
passionate voice
on behalf of
working children.

I first met Robin in early 2002. Pharis Harvey, then Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Fund (ILRF), brought him to the AFOP offices which were then

in the Ballston community of Arlington, VA. Robin was working with Len Morris on a major documentary of children working in horrendous conditions in places such as India, Brazil, and Indonesia. The film would be called "Stolen Childhoods" and was going to be a call to action for people who might not know that millions of children's lives are jeopardized and their futures compromised by working long hours under dangerous conditions at very young ages. But in some of the countries, officials asked him if he was sure the United States didn't also have a child labor problem. His inquiries led him to ILRF, and eventually that led to a meeting at AFOP, since in the 1990s under Diane Mull's leadership the Association had showcased the problem of very young children working in terrible conditions in agriculture in America.

I was very new at AFOP and didn't know much about children serving as hired farmworkers. Robin and Len had virtually no budget for this part of the film, since they hadn't planned on filming in America. Robin needed to figure out if there was a story to film and narrate, and

where that story could best be recorded. I encouraged him to attend the upcoming AFOP national conference in New Orleans where several young farmworkers would be in attendance. While we were not in a financially flush position at the time, I was able to come up with enough money to pay his airfare and lodging for the conference. He spoke at length with the young people and decided there was indeed a story in the onion fields of Texas.

He spent the next few months raising the money needed to sponsor a lengthy trip to Texas. Accompanied by our then-staffer Reid Maki, he filmed children as young as eight working in the fields in very hot weather, using sharp tools, at very low pay. The footage he got resulted in a twelve minute segment of "Stolen Childhoods." The accompanying narration by Meryl Streep made a compelling case for the need to pay serious attention to the serious



Photo by: Robin Romano: young child in Texas onion field

problem of children working in America's fields.

A few years later we asked Robin to create a short film for AFOP on migrant children working in another part of the country. As always, money was very tight and

I considered using a less expensive bidder for this task.

But on reflection, we decided that his passion, persistence, and artistic eye would likely overcome the cost differences when the final product was done. This proved to be the case: we sent Robin to Minnesota to film children working the sugar beets. On his first trip, it rained the entire week, so he only got footage of families in their rented shacks that week. Although we didn't have funds for a second trip, Robin went anyway, paying all but the basic travel expenses himself. This time he attained the footage he needed of children cutting the weeds and picking rocks in the beet fields. It



Still from Robin Romano's film *Stolen Childhoods*

turned out to be an excellent ten minute DVD titled; *Children in the Fields*. AFOP sells copies of this video which has been shipped all over the country and used in countless meetings and conferences.

Shortly after Hilda Solis became Secretary of Labor, Robin somehow engineered a forum that the Secretary hosted on child labor in agriculture at the Department of Labor. It was early in the first Obama Administration when we all had high hopes for a legislative fix for the unequal protections that children working in agriculture experience. The forum was well attended and, I thought, excellent in highlighting the problems and possible solutions.



Norma Flores López with former Secretary of Labor Solis

Later, Robin enlisted the help of actress Eva Longoria. She became the Hollywood celebrity leader on child labor in agriculture in America, and was the featured speaker at a Hill press conference the day that Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) re-introduced the Children's Act for Responsible Employment, a bill that would grant farmworker children the same protections as all other working children in America. To this day, Ms. Longoria is a strong advocate for this cause.

Unfortunately, the political strength of the farm industry checkmated every attempt to pass that bill and even the effort the Secretary later

made to establish rules that would better protect young farmworkers under the current law.

He was not only a wonderfully gifted artist, but had a keen mind that made him a great partner with our very own Norma Flores López, Director of AFOP's *Children in the Fields Campaign*. Along with the CLC, they strategized for the kinds of actions that we needed to move the cause of children in the fields forward. As a result, Norma recently represented the US State Department on a trip to Peru to discuss child labor, and was the US delegate at the International Conference on Child Labor in Brazil.

Additionally, Robin was instrumental in facilitating new partnerships and media opportunities for AFOP's Health & Safety Program which trains farmworkers on pesticide safety and heat stress prevention.

Advocates who knew Robin appreciated both his artistic contributions to our movement and his intense passion for the cause. He was not a filmmaker who just wanted to do a good job on a topic, he was a passionate advocate for improving the lives of the children and the families who allowed him to film their experiences. Persistence is a key ingredient in producing social change and Robin was a master at it.

His documentaries also reveal the value and need for the National Farmworker Jobs Training program. NFJP provides farmworkers with options of training for a career with livable wages and a way out of the fields, and ending the cycle of poverty.

All of us who care about making life a little better for the thousands of children who work in the fields will greatly miss the keen eye and extraordinary talents of Robin. ♦

Request for Nominations: Effective Workforce Practices for Farmworkers

The U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) is compiling a collection of effective workforce practices in serving migrant and seasonal farmworkers. This collection will be published on ETA's forthcoming on-line resource page, *The Agricultural Connection*, for the benefit of practitioners that work to promote economic opportunities for farmworkers.

In collaboration with Social Policy Research Associates (SPRA), ETA is requesting nominations for "Innovations in Action," which are noteworthy and promising workforce practices for serving farmworkers.

While workforce practices on all topics are welcome, ETA is particularly interested in:

- Models for collaborative partnerships, such as with community colleges, American Job Centers (One-Stop Career Centers), or other federal/state-funded migrant programs.
- Effective approaches to serving specific target populations, such as farmworkers with criminal backgrounds.
- Unique service strategies, such as providing integrated ESL/occupational training to farmworkers or effective outreach strategies.

Please follow the instructions below and submit nominations to Jeanna Vaughn at Vaughn@afop.org. To ensure that practitioners in the field will be able to access the optimum resources available, we ask that your submissions represent the very best practices that you are implementing or have encountered.

Questions? Contact Jeanna Vaughn at Vaughn@afop.org or (202) 828-6006 ext. 109.

Submitting Nominations for "Innovations in Action"

Innovations in Action nominations must be:

- ⇒ Practices designed to promote employment opportunities for migrant and seasonal farmworkers;
- ⇒ Practices currently being implemented that demonstrate potential for continued success and impact; and
- ⇒ Practices that can be implemented at the local or state level.

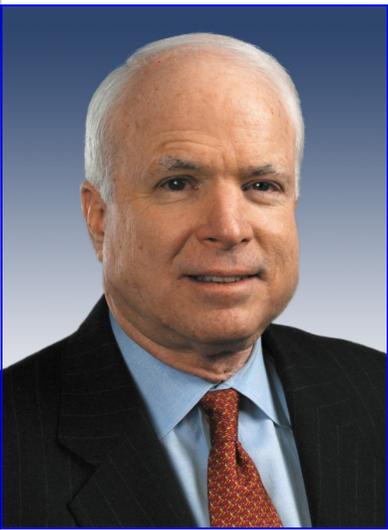
To submit an Innovation in Action, email a word document that contains the following information:

- ⇒ Your name, organization, e-mail address, and phone number;
- ⇒ The name or title of the workforce practice being nominated;
- ⇒ The organization implementing the workforce practice;
- ⇒ The location (city/state) of the workforce practice;
- ⇒ A complete description of the workforce practice; and
- ⇒ An explanation of how the practice demonstrates potential for continued success and impact.

Submissions of nominations for Innovations in Actions should not be longer than two pages. Individuals submitting practices may be contacted with follow-up.

10th Annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference

By Robert Crumley, Director of Communications, AFOP



Senator McCain, R-AZ

"This is an effort about the present and the future of America," said Sen. John McCain, R-AZ., speaking on immigration reform at the 10th annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference at Georgetown Law on October 31.

"It's about what defines what kind of a nation we are.

And the reason why the United States ... is the exceptional nation and the last century was called the American Century is because we've had a fresh infusion of blood and vitality into our nation generation after generation in our history. And that is something we should celebrate."

The Senator served as the afternoon keynote at the conference, co-sponsored by the Migration Policy Institute, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, the Center for Migration Studies, and Georgetown Law.

McCain addressed criticisms that the immigration reform bill that passed the Senate in June would harm the economy and displace American workers — "demonstrably false," he said.

Although panelists at the conference were less than optimistic about immigration reform in the House, there was plenty on the table for discussion throughout the day, including the role of employers, lessons learned from the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals initiative.

Morning keynote speaker, former Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour discussed the need for skilled labor, a need NFJP actively meets. When

Hurricane Katrina rendered a large portion of Mississippi housing uninhabitable, the state desperately needed labor — and Barbour found himself a supporter of immigration reform. Barbour also noted that America does not have the resources to arrest, incarcerate and deport millions of immigrants who have already been working here for years or decades. "Why in God's name would we send them home?" he asked.

Bruce Morrison, U.S. Representative (D-CT, 1983-1991) stated "All the talk about the border is beside the point if we don't focus on what happens at the workplace."

On a November 4th conference call from the Administration, Secretary Vilsack said we need a permanent, well-trained workforce, and the Department of Labor, of which the National Farm Worker Jobs Training Program is a part, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, and the United Farmworkers have created a strong and historic coalition in support of fair legislation that takes into account housing, training, pay, and transportation for farmworkers.

Vilsack also referenced the Whitehouse report, *Fixing Our Broken Immigration System*, which says one in 12 of American jobs are related in some way to agriculture, whether they be maintaining equipment, providing care of livestock, planting and harvesting produce, transporting to market, or selling. As a cautionary note, he also added that the volume of food being produced in America is on the decline as is the diversity of crops being produced and reaching our grocery shelves. ♦

NFJP-Assisting Each Other

by Jeanna Vaughn, Director of Workforce Development, AFOP

National Farmworker Jobs Program (NFJP) organizations are experts in assisting migrant and seasonal farmworkers attain needed education and training to move into higher-paying and stable jobs. The 52 programs, located in 49 states and Puerto Rico and operated by non-profit and public agencies, employ various methods to recruit and serve the farmworker populations in their areas. Sharing expertise across programs is important to ensure challenges are addressed in the most effective ways possible and that the best employment outcomes are being attained for farmworkers.

AFOP, along with the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), and in partnership with the NFJP grantee community, are excited to announce the launch of the NFJP Peer Technical Assistance Initiative. This initiative will create structured site visit opportunities for grantees to explore strategies to address specific challenges, receive recommendations for effective practices to implement, and help formulate action steps for improvement. Other ETA programs, such as Youth Build, have been conducting similar peer to peer projects with positive results.

Grantees were asked to consider their strengths in certain areas and answer a survey providing details on what topics they would be willing to provide technical assistance on. Some of the topics include outreach, staff training, case management, job development, and working with special populations (such as ex-offenders or high migrant populations). AFOP is cataloging the responses to create a resource guide to match programs with certain strengths to others looking to gain guidance in those areas. The rollout of the program will begin this winter with three scheduled site visits. The NFJP community is extremely supportive of the initiative and many have volunteered to be a part of the visits and ongoing technical assistance efforts. ♦

AFOP Represents the U.S. at Global Conference

by Norma Flores López , Director of *Children in the Fields Campaign*, AFOP



CLC Executive Committee

Brazil hosted the III Global Conference on Child Labor October 8-10, 2013. More than 1,300 delegates representing 152 countries participated. Norma Flores López, Director of *Children in the Fields Campaign* at AFOP, was selected to represent the U.S. as the civil society.

The objective of the conference was to evaluate actions taken on the fight against child labor, to deepen the exchange among countries and regions, and to reach, through government and social partners' commitment, the acceleration of the eradication of the worst forms of child labor.

Guy Ryder, Director General of International Labour Organisation (ILO), reminded participants of the "168 million reasons to be present at this conference." Ryder referred to the ILO's recent report that shows child labor estimates have gone down by a third between 2000 and 2012, but still remained too high to easily attain the 2016 goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labor.

As many as 500,000 children work on U.S. farms harvesting fruits and vegetables. Under U.S. labor law, children as young as 12 are allowed to perform back-breaking work for unlimited hours outside of the school day in the agriculture industry. In all other industries, children need to be 16 years of age with stricter protections on work hours and the type of work they are allowed to perform.

AFOP is committed to ensuring all children – including farmworker children – have equal protections and equal access to quality education. The *Children in the Fields Campaign* continues to represent farmworker children and share their stories around the world, and advocate for a better future. ♦

Letter from the field

Susana Marchan, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas

I work for Workforce Development and wanted to share this for you to pass along. I would like to highlight the assistance and compassion that Motivation, Education and Training (MET) employees have in their efforts to help Migrant and Seasonal farmworkers. Their caring and assistance should not go unnoticed.

As a Migrant and Seasonal outreach worker, I am grateful to MET for collaborating with us to provide services to Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers.

Although we have had some farmworker issues with a company outside of Louisiana, I would like to express my gratitude to MET for all of their cooperation, efforts and assistance.

Earlier this summer we had four workers approach us for help as they dealt with a challenging employment situation. While living in Texas they were promised work in Louisiana, but once they arrived, no work was available and had only \$1 between them.

For starters, one of the farmworkers did not have money available to buy a bus ticket to his expected work site in Louisiana, so MET-Harlingen purchased one for him at \$167. The case worker, Sylvia Murphy, went out of her way to get the funds and purchase his ticket - even driving 30 miles to Brownsville, Texas to do his intake.

Unfortunately, out of the four farm workers that were referred to MET, two (including the one who was helped with his initial ticket) had to return because of issues with their employer, and the other two were eventually fired.

Kay Thompson, from MET-Louisiana, was contacted and also went out of her way to assist these two stranded, afraid, and broke workers.

Kay went above and beyond her job when she took it upon herself to travel 35 miles after hours to bring help. MET provided one of them with food money and a bus ticket back home to Texas.

The second farmworker had been fired and was not allowed back into his housing so was assisted with a motel room and dinner. Kay also assisted him, unsuccessfully, in jumpstarting his car. With the assistance of Kay's husband, MET also purchased him a new battery, tires and filled his tank with gas to get back home. They also provided him with money so he would be able to eat during his trip.

I was again moved while taking a completely different complaint from a farmworker. He shared that during his recent drive to Michigan, to work for a tomato grower, that his vehicle's radiator was damaged and no longer worked. He was frustrated because he needed his car to look for work and to drive where the crops were. He had no money and even fewer options. Knowing Sylvia from MET-Harlingen was so incredible the first time, I reached out to her again. She responded right away that they had already contacted him by phone and would be making arrangements to meet.

Again, just a quick note to share how impressed I am with the quality of the MET staff and their commitment to helping people who are migrant and seasonal farmworkers.

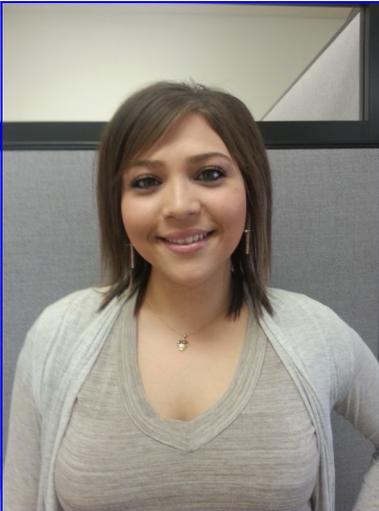
Thank you,

Susana Marchan
Workforce Development Specialist II ◆

Success Stories

Jovanna C. Cortez

Story by Trinidad Rodriguez, Proteus



Jovanna Cortez
Photo courtesy of Proteus

In September 2012, Jovanna Cortez came to the Proteus Dinuba Service Center in search of employment services outside of seasonal agriculture work. She had been referred to Proteus by her friends and family. At the time of her enrollment, Jovanna was very nervous about

seeking services on account that she had a limited work

history that consisted of only picking and packing nectarines and peaches. As a farmworker she earned only \$8 per hour and \$5,113 per year. In addition, she was a single mother with a one year old son and had recently been diagnosed with diabetes.

At Proteus, Jovanna was enrolled into the Department of Labor's National Farmworker Jobs Program. In the program she received the following services: career counseling, job search assistance, development of an individual employment plan (IEP), rental assistance, clothing, food assistance, auto repair services, case management, Office Assistant training, and job placement assistance. In May 2013, Jovanna successfully completed her work experience training as an Office Assistant.

With the help of Proteus, Jovanna was hired as a Sales Associate with Wal-Mart in June 2013 at \$9.30 an hour. In October 2013, Jovanna was promoted to a Customer Service Manager and now earns \$9.70 an hour. Jovanna is very grateful for all the services that Proteus has provided her and states, "I am so thankful that I no longer have to depend on seasonal agriculture work to support my family".



Marcus Hill

Story by Kandace Bowman, MET



Marcus Hill
Photo courtesy of MET

Marcus Hill, a single father of two young children, worked a variety of agriculture jobs, stooping low to the ground to pick cotton while trying to avoid cuts on his hands and fingers from the dried bristles left behind.

The employment prospects in his

hometown of Newellton, Louisiana were grim, as the town has limited industry with most of the employment opportunities being in agriculture. His agricultural wages totaled \$1,180 per year.

A former client referred Marcus to the MET program. Having previously driven tractors on the farm he already knew he was interested in truck driving.

From the beginning of our relationship with Marcus, he was thinking to his future. He knew that he had to have a job with meaningful pay, benefits, and a retirement plan in order to help support his two children.

Marcus successfully finished the CDL class and obtained his license. Upon completion of his training, Marcus was hired by a local company driving a delivery truck. He has maintained his employment for a year, and his post program earnings were \$21,817.00. Additionally, Marcus has health benefits and a 401k, along with a flexible workweek. ◆

Success Stories

Jorge Rodriguez

Story by Roni Spetalnick, HELP



Photo by:
Jorge Rodriguez

Jorge Rodriguez is one of HELP-New Mexico National Farmworker Job's Program Classroom Training (CRT) students. Jorge is from a small rural community in southwestern New Mexico where farming is the predominant way of life. Jorge has been influenced to further his education not only by

his mother but also

by his life experiences when he learned early on of the back breaking work in the fields as he picked onions side by side with other immigrant families. Jorge has worked primarily in the Hatch Valley since he was 13. In a recent essay he wrote:

"Although I was raised by a single mother, the pressure to find work at a young age was never emphasized on me. I took it upon myself to attempt to make my own income and, in a sense, gain independence. When I was 13, I went with my friend and his family to harvest onions. This experience left me with numerous cuts, blisters and aches which stayed with me days after working. Yet in my eyes I had accomplished a lot, I had earned my first one hundred dollars."

This incredible young man is currently a senior in the New Mexico State University's College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). He recently expressed his gratitude to HELP-NM and for the National Farmworker Jobs Program when he stated:

"The HELP Program has been a blessing. I will be graduating this December with a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, a bachelor's degree in foreign languages (Spanish) and a minor in Counseling Educational Psychology. I am currently employed as a peer mentor. I am also a peer educator and I have an internship

with ACLU of New Mexico all while being a full time student and staying active with campus organizations. Because of my busy schedule I am not capable of working many hours, that is where the HELP Program really stepped in.

"I can honestly say that the funding from the HELP Program has facilitated my success this semester. The funding I receive has helped me worry less on how I am going to put gas in my vehicle or buy groceries; and focus more on my education and passion towards border community social justice issues."

Jorge's academic performance exemplifies his focus and determination. Jorge has a 3.68 grade point average and has managed to retain his Regents Scholarship and his status on the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Honor List. Dr. Cynthia Berjerano, Chief Principal Investigator for the College Migrant Program tells our HELP-NM staff of the privilege it has been to see Jorge's evolution from a CAMP freshman to a senior. She remembers Jorge and his mother in the fall of 2010 sitting in a University classroom for the very first time at the CAMP student/parent orientation and how anxious mom and son were and how proud she is now that he is about to graduate in three and a half years. Dr. Berjerano tells of Jorge's tenacious spirit, drive to succeed and openness to new academic experiences that will help him grow intellectually and professionally.

This commitment to his studies, his community and his desire to "pay it back" is evident as he demonstrates his leadership skills through his most recent work at the ACLU, and as one of the CAMP COMPAS (Cultivating Opportunities through Mentoring and Promoting Academic Success) Peer Mentors, where he works with five freshmen (farmworker youth) as their mentor providing tutoring and mentoring for them along with anything else they may need.

Jorge is truly a HELP-NM success story and a testament to what our assistance through the National Farmworker Jobs Program is able to accomplish.

Success Stories

Seasonal Farmworker Excellence Award Winner

Story by Brenda Robles, Employer Training Research



Mr. and Mrs. Joaquin Heraldez receiving his Excellence Award at the AFOP 2013 National Conference.

Mr. Joaquin Heraldez came from Sinaloa, Mexico in 1976. He was by himself here in the states with only a third grade education. He quickly entered into agricultural work to survive. He worked in the

carrot fields, spraying, cleaning and packing carrots. In addition, he also worked in vineyards picking grapes and he harvested peaches. He has worked in farm labor for more than 20 years.

Life in the fields was extremely difficult for him. He states, "It was very intense labor and very hot." He admitted that he started to have a problem with alcoholism due to the immense heat he felt in the fields; he would drink beer with his co-workers after work. He is thankful that he turned away from that. While it did disrupt his family life a bit, he did not lose his family.

He was seeking a better opportunity for him and his family. He was tired of working arduously in the fields. He decided to go to Employers' Training Resource and was placed into the Farmworker Opportunity program. He trained in maintenance and as a welder's helper during work experience. After training, he would come home and care for his wife who had cancer at the time. He had the support of his mother-in-law during the day to help him care for his wife.

He saw difficulties due to his age. He felt many doors were closed for him because of this. According to Mr. Heraldez, he overcame his challenges with the help of God. He had a turn around when he went to the WESTEC Safety Certification training. He realized during this training that age does not matter when you have goals.

Aside from his commitment to his job search, getting the certifications allowed doors to open. In turn, he was able to get a job with KSI in the Oilfields.

He presently works as a Well Preparer making \$12 an hour. This is a stark contrast to making minimum wage in farm work.

He has less pressure from what he felt in farmwork. He feels he is at peace and overall he is ecstatic his wife is cancer free.

Mr. Heraldez's new credo is, "Si se puede." (Yes, you can) He recommends farm workers to go to agencies such as Employers' Training Resources to get help in meeting their job and personal goals. ♦



Success Stories

Son Leaves the Family Farm

Story by Nelson Diaz, Telamon, VA



Todd Blanks
Photo courtesy of Telamon

Todd Blanks of South Boston, Virginia was raised on a farm. His grandfather is a tobacco farmer and Todd worked on the farm for as long as he could remember. He worked seasonally as a tobacco picker for almost six years.

Although farming was part of their tradition, his family was concerned about the future of the small family-owned farming business. In case anything ever happened to the farm, and to help their son develop a stable income stream for the future, they advised him to pursue other career opportunities outside of agriculture.

In March of 2011, Todd came to the Danville office of Telamon and asked what we could do for him. He had already done some investigating and had decided that he might like to learn about and become certified in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC). He said, "I... found HVAC to be one of the few industries still growing and I knew that it would be a rewarding and ever changing career path."

The staff in Danville met with Todd and introduced him to our NFJP program, explained his commitments and how the program could assist him during his education. They also discussed how they could be of value to him afterwards in finding employment. They performed testing and assessments, and

determined that Todd was indeed well suited to a career in HVAC.

Todd enrolled at Danville Community College (DCC) in fall of 2011. He studied HVAC with the goal of receiving a Diploma in Air Conditioning and Refrigeration and Certificates in Summer and Winter servicing programs. During the two years Todd attended classes at DCC, Telamon assisted him financially. He said that going to school full time while working was the biggest challenge of his life, and he was grateful for the assistance we were able to provide.

In addition to providing money for transportation, we also helped him to pay for items such as books and tools. Within one week of Todd's graduation in July 2013, we helped prepare him for interviews with Brady Services in Raleigh, NC. A few weeks later, Todd was offered the job.

He is now working full-time with benefits and making \$17 per hour. Todd felt honored and was very grateful. He said Brady is the ideal place to work and he wouldn't be there without the assistance of Telamon and the National Farmworker Jobs Training Program.



AFOP Washington Newsline

Once social change begins,
it cannot be reversed.
You cannot uneducate the person
who has learned to read,
humiliate the person who feels pride,
and you cannot oppress people
who are not afraid anymore.

—César Chávez